

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 82.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the joint resolution was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.J. Res. 82.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 703) recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supporting continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 703

Whereas April 26, 2006, marks the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas serious radiological, health, and socioeconomic consequences for the populations of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, as well as for the populations of other affected areas, have been identified since the disaster;

Whereas the Chernobyl Forum, an initiative launched by the International Atomic Energy Agency and supported by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and other United Nations agencies, as well as by the governments of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, examined the scientific evidence of the human health effects and the environmental impact of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas the findings of the Chernobyl Forum, issued in September 2005, significantly added to the understanding of the health consequences and economic impact caused by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas the Chernobyl Forum found that approximately 5,000,000 people live in areas of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia that were contaminated by radioactivity;

Whereas the populations of the affected areas who were exposed as children have experienced significant increases in thyroid cancer;

Whereas the lives and health of people in the affected areas continue to be heavily burdened by the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas numerous charitable, humanitarian, and environmental organizations from the United States and the international

community are committed to overcoming the extensive consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;

Whereas the United States has sought to help the people of the affected areas through various forms of assistance;

Whereas humanitarian assistance and public health research into the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster will continue to be needed in the coming decades when a large number of latent health effects are expected to emerge;

Whereas the United States strongly supports improving nuclear safety in Ukraine;

Whereas, in 1997, the United States, the European Union, and Ukraine developed the Shelter Implementation Plan for the purpose of protecting people and the environment from the dangers of the large quantity of highly radioactive material contained in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant;

Whereas as the United States is the largest single country donor to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, which was created with the purpose of funding the Shelter Implementation Plan, having pledged a total of \$203,000,000; and

Whereas the most critical component of the Shelter Implementation Plan will be the construction of a new shelter designed to better protect people and the environment from the radioactive remains of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and expresses sympathy for the ongoing effects of the disaster, including adverse health consequences and deaths;

(2) calls upon national and international health organizations to focus their research into the public health consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster into areas identified by the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, so that the global community can benefit from the findings of such research;

(3) supports continued United States assistance to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, the Shelter Implementation Plan, construction of a facility to store spent nuclear fuel, and other efforts to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster; and

(4) urges other countries and the European Union to continue to provide assistance to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, the Shelter Implementation Plan, construction of a facility to store spent nuclear fuel, and other efforts to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 703, a resolution introduced by Congressman ELTON

GALLEGLY, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats of the House International Relations Committee. House Resolution 703 recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supports continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to this terrible accident.

I would like to commend Mr. GALLEGLY for his hard work on this resolution as well as that of Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania; Ms. KAPTUR of Ohio; Mr. LEVIN of Michigan; as well as our distinguished ranking member, Mr. LANTOS of California, for their great interest in ensuring that the international community lives up to its obligations to assist Ukraine and other countries in the region to overcome the continuing health, environmental, and economic problems caused by the Chernobyl accident.

In just a few weeks, on April 26, the world will mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl power plant accident, the most devastating civilian nuclear disaster in human history. This disaster caused serious radiological, health, and socioeconomic consequences for the people of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Millions of people, children in particular, suffered severe and debilitating health defects and were forced to flee from their homes.

Although 20 years have passed, the lives and health of individuals within the affected areas continue to be heavily burdened by the aftermath of the nuclear disaster. Ukraine must not only provide care for those affected but also ensure that the radioactive waste and environmental destruction from the explosion do not pose a threat to the region.

The sarcophagus currently encasing the remnants of the destroyed reactor is in disrepair and may collapse at any time. In response to this emergency, the United States, the European Union, and Ukraine developed the Shelter Implementation Plan for the purpose of protecting people and the environment from the large quantity of highly radioactive material contained in the reactor.

The most critical component of the Shelter Implementation Plan will be the construction of a new shelter designed to better protect the surrounding area from leakage of radioactive remains. The total cost of the shelter could well be in excess of \$1 billion. In addition, Ukraine must still deal with the health and economic impact of the Chernobyl disaster, including the treatment of thousands of people who were exposed as children and have experienced significant increases in thyroid cancer.

This legislation expresses the sympathy of the House for the ongoing effects of the disaster. In addition, H. Res. 703 calls upon the U.S. and other countries to continue to provide assistance for the construction of a new shelter and a facility to store spent nuclear

fuel, and other efforts to mitigate the many adverse consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Madam Speaker, Ukraine is an important ally of the United States. Since the Orange Revolution, our bilateral relationship has been characterized by closer cooperation on trade issues, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is important that the House go on record in support of the Ukrainian people in their effort to overcome the negative economic and social impact resulting from this tragic accident.

Again, I would like to commend the work of Congressman GALLEGLY on this issue and for the introduction of this important resolution.

Madam Speaker, I urge the support of House Resolution 703.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this resolution.

April 2006, marks the 20th anniversary of the catastrophic accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine. At the time of this disaster, Ukraine was still under the iron domination of the Soviet Union. When the accident occurred, we saw the stock Soviet response to all major disasters: cover it up, regardless of the consequences to the innocent civilians living in the region. It was not until radioactive particles were being detected in Finland that the Soviets were forced to admit that the Chernobyl reactor No. 4 was burning.

While the authorities were engaged in a political coverup, scores of brave rescue and emergency workers were attempting to douse the burning reactor and hastily construct a concrete cover over the reactor, the so-called sarcophagus that is now in danger of collapse.

According to a United Nations study, Madam Speaker, more than 200,000 emergency workers were exposed to high levels of radiation and some 2,200 will ultimately die from radiation-caused illness during their lifetimes.

The Chernobyl accident also caused some 4,000 cases of thyroid cancer, the majority of which have occurred in individuals who were children or adolescents at the time of the accident.

On December 15, 2000, with the encouragement of the United States and the international community, the President of Ukraine decided to shut down the last functioning reactor at Chernobyl, thus effectively closing the entire nuclear plant and putting an end to a shameful Soviet legacy.

□ 1430

The Soviet response to the Chernobyl disaster should serve as an important reminder to future generations of the folly of totalitarian regimes and the need to ensure that democracy remains at the core of our foreign policy. In-

stead of covering up toxic chemical slicks traveling silently down China's waterways towards crowded cities, Beijing should move towards openness and transparency to save lives; and rather than pretending that the destruction of 700,000 homes in Zimbabwe was a clean-up operation, Zimbabwe's totalitarian leaders should be empowering the young people in these slums to become the next generation of democratic leaders in southern Africa.

Madam Speaker, the Chernobyl disaster has many lessons for our age, and our resolution is an important reminder of the importance of freedom and democracy worldwide. I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution. It is important to not only remember those that perished in this terrible tragedy, but to keep in mind that individuals in the affected area are still suffering.

Although the world's worst nuclear disaster occurred at Chernobyl nuclear power station in Northern Ukraine, the wind carried 70 percent of the radioactive material into the neighboring country of Belarus. This disaster has impacted the region economically, socially, and medically.

I would like to recognize the efforts of Chernobyl Children's Project International, a not-for-profit organization that works with the people of Belarus to help them overcome the lingering effects of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. This organization provides humanitarian and medical aid to over three million children the United Nations recognizes as suffering from the Chernobyl disaster. In addition, I would like to recognize Children of Chernobyl which is an organization that works to provide a respite from ongoing exposure to radiation by bringing children to the United States to stay with host families for the summer.

In my district, Annandale United Methodist Church has worked with Children of Chernobyl since 1993. Annandale area host families have opened their homes and hearts and allowed children from the effected region to stay with them for the summer to get some much needed rest. These children significantly benefit from the clean water, healthy food, fresh air, and love that Annandale area families provide. The children return to their homes with a new understanding of American culture as well as new clothes, shoes and other necessities. During the children's visit, Northern Virginia area doctors donate their time to provide the children with medical care, dental checkups and vision and orthopedic care.

It is important that here in America we continue to support the recovering from the Chernobyl disaster. Twenty years after this tragic accident, we are observing the devastating affects of long term exposure to radiation, and I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution marking the 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of this important legislation.

On April 26th, 1986 the Chernobyl Nuclear Facility's Reactor Number Four exploded, re-

leasing over 100 tons of radioactive material in what remains the world's worst nuclear accident. We may never know the full extent of the damage this accident has done to the health of people living in the surrounding areas or to the environment. It is clear, though, that the deaths attributable to the Chernobyl disaster number in the thousands and that millions of people in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus have been exposed to radioactive contamination.

It is important as we remember the victims of Chernobyl that we also recognize the ongoing consequences of the disaster and the work that still needs to be done. We must continue to help those people in the areas affected by radioactive fallout. The populations exposed to this fallout have experienced significant increases in thyroid cancer, still births and birth defects, as well as economic hardship resulting from the impact of the disaster on local economies.

The United States must also continue to support the Chernobyl Shelter Fund and the Shelter Implementation Plan. A new shelter for Reactor Number 4 is essential to mitigating further health and environmental consequences from the radioactive materials inside the facility. To date, the U.S. has pledged over \$200 million to the Shelter Fund, helping to ensure that this work will be completed.

The resolution before us supports these efforts, and recognizes that although this disaster occurred two decades ago, there is still much more we must do to help the Government of Ukraine and the affected populations cope with its consequences. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, 20 years ago the world witnessed one of the last crimes of the Soviet communist regime against its own people. The biggest nuclear catastrophe in human history was kept secret from Soviet civilians, who were exposed to massive amounts of radiation that exceeded the medically tolerable norm by 100 times.

On April 25–26, 1986, many firefighters sacrificed their lives to put out the huge fire caused by the explosion. Thirty-one died. Their heroism prevented a European Hiroshima.

In 1986, the Soviet Government let millions of people in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia conduct their daily lives as usual—completely unprepared, unwarned, and unprotected. On May 1, 4 days after the catastrophe, citizens of Kiev, Minsk, Gomel, and dozens of other cities went outdoors celebrating Labor Day, an official holiday in the Soviet Union. Only days later the civilian population was gradually informed of the disaster's extent.

By that time, millions of people, including infants and children, had received high doses of radiation. Dozens were doomed to suffer painful deaths in the years to come. Thousands are still coping with health problems caused by exposure during those tragic days, including thyroid and breast cancer, and tumors. The ultimate prognosis for millions remains unclear.

20 years later, grave danger remains at Chernobyl. 200 tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste in Reactor #4 remains separated from the outside world by a "Shelter" that was determined to be reliable only until 2006.

Today's occasion is an opportunity for all people of goodwill to commemorate Chernobyl

victims—both civilians, and the brave individuals who sacrificed their lives to save those exposed to radiation.

European nations and Japan should follow the U.S. example and live up to their pledge to contribute to creation of the Shelter-2. This barrier would be effective for another 100 years, and has been approved by the Ukrainian government and international experts. The cost is estimated to be \$1 billion, which is a small price to pay given the price-tag in dollars and lives of another radiological disaster.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, as the world prepares to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, I rise in support of the H. Res. 703 Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supporting continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I applaud the leadership of Congressmen GALLEGLY, HYDE, LANTOS and WEXLER on this important issue.

Twenty years ago this month, a human error triggered an explosion at the Chernobyl Power Plant's Reactor No. 4, causing the worst civilian nuclear catastrophe in the history of mankind, one which transcended geographic boundaries. Immediately after the explosion, increased levels of radiation were registered as far as Japan and the United States. The hardest hit were the people of Ukraine, Belarus, and western Russia, collectively taking close to 70 percent of the radioactive fallout.

The scope of devastation that followed was truly unprecedented. More than 600,000 emergency workers, liquidators, risked their lives putting out the reactor's inferno that raged for 10 days while exposing themselves to extremely high and deadly doses of radiation. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes because of radioactive contamination. More than 5 million people in Ukraine, Belarus and western Russia found themselves coping with life in towns and villages contaminated by iodine and cesium. Thousands of square miles of agricultural land and forests had to be removed from use because of contamination.

Twenty years after the initial fallout, Chernobyl has not been relegated to history books. Twenty years later, it continues to cause human suffering, environmental and economic hardship.

The disaster at Chernobyl has triggered a well documented epidemic of thyroid cancer, particularly among those who were infants and teenagers at the time of the explosion. Long latency periods for other types of cancers and ailments suggest that the toll on human health in the affected populations is a developing story, and not a thing of the past.

The consequences to the environment, as well as agriculture are equally devastating. Shortly after the fallout, short-lived iodine deposits onto vegetation entered into the food supply, mainly through milk, delivering large doses of internal radiation to consuming public. As for long-lived long-lived cesium, that will remain a problem for decades to come.

The Chernobyl disaster has been causing tremendous economic hardships as well, with Ukraine and Belarus spending up to 5 percent of their respective GDP on mitigation of its consequences. Environmental and economic degradation in the affected regions, increased health care costs, loss in productivity of human capital add to the heavy burdens of Chernobyl's enduring legacy.

As scientists and researchers continue their pursuit of a greater understanding of Chernobyl's long term consequences on human health and environment, it is important that we avoid closing the page on Chernobyl by rushing to speedy conclusions. Instead, I join many of my constituents in urging caution in accepting as definitive and conclusive some of the findings of the IAEA-led Chernobyl Forum report, particularly in the area of health consequences. Our Ukrainian colleagues in particular, encourage long term commitment to researching and analyzing Chernobyl's legacy. The whole world stands to benefit as together, we advance our understanding of man-made environmental disasters of this scope.

Another important aspect of Chernobyl's legacy is its impact on energy policy choices that are before the Government of Ukraine. It is my belief that Ukraine's long term energy security is not feasible without renewed emphasis on renewable energy. We share the same concerns in U.S., and both of our countries share great potential for development of bio-fuels, and other renewable energy technologies, such as fuel-cells, wind power.

It is also critically important that we address the issue of completing the Shelter Implementation Plan with the urgency and efficiency it deserves. President Yushenko has highlighted this priority in his address to the Joint Session of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. It is often said that the next Chernobyl can be Chernobyl itself—the decaying concrete-and-steel sarcophagus, hastily constructed after the accident to secure the Reactor No. 4, has an estimated warranty of 20 years. That time is now, as the structural integrity of the encasement causes great concern. It is not just an Ukrainian issue, but indeed an issue of European security. As the largest single country donor to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, the U.S. provides important leadership in this multi-national donor effort. I urge the redoubling of efforts by all stakeholders to the Shelter Implementation Plan to ensure its timely completion.

The Congressional Ukrainian Caucus is stepping up to the plate in commemorating the somber milestone of the 20th anniversary of Chernobyl. I am grateful to my colleagues and our Caucus Co-Chairs, Congressmen WELDON, LEVIN and BARTLETT, for their strong leadership and support in organizing events commemorating Chernobyl's anniversary. They include a special commemorative photo exhibit Chernobyl: 20 which documents the human experience there over the past 20 years, looking through the lenses of the world's top photographers. The exhibit is scheduled to open at the Rayburn Foyer on April 26, 2006 at 10 a.m.; an in-depth briefing, scheduled for April 27, 2006, 2 p.m.–6 p.m., will explore a broad range of Chernobyl issues, including impact on human health and agricultural/food systems, environmental, economic and social rehabilitation in the affected regions, U.S. and international assistance, Chernobyl Shelter Implementation Plan progress; and finally, the Congressional reception honoring the tireless work of NGOs dedicated to improving human condition in the affected regions, scheduled for the evening of April 27, 2006, 6 p.m.–8 p.m.

The U.S. has provided assistance in remediation efforts in the aftermath of the catastrophe, followed by technical, humanitarian and economic assistance in the subsequent years that. One of the objectives of the briefing on Chernobyl is to review past U.S. assist-

ance to the countries stricken by Chernobyl disaster, and identify current priorities that require continued commitment and financial support.

Life in the Chernobyl affected regions of Ukraine, Belarus and western Russia would have been a much more difficult challenge were it was not for the tireless work of many NGOs that go wherever they see human needs and opportunities to improve people's lives. Many lives were not just improved, but saved, because of the work of such organizations as Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund and Chernobyl Children's Project International. This month, these charities send multi-million dollar convoys and airlifts of valuable medical equipment and medicine to Ukraine and Belarus, over the past decade bringing more than \$100 million worth of medical supplies to those in need. This example of human compassion and resilience in the face of adversity is truly a hopeful sign for all survivors of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

I am submitting for the RECORD the respective statements of Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund and Chernobyl Children's Project International in connection with H. Res. 703.

Finally, I would like to mention the political dimension of this catastrophe. When the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl blew up 20 years ago, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and other countries were part of the closed Soviet society, one where secrecy prevailed and freedom was denied. In my view, there was a direct link between the inefficiencies of the Soviet system, indeed its criminal disregard for the environment and for its citizens, and the disaster we commemorate today. In many ways, Chernobyl was a wake-up call for the Soviet Union, for the world. We dare not fall asleep again. We must continue to support Ukraine's democracy and ease her transition to the European Union; we must align ourselves with the brave people of Belarus who are trying to advance their own beleaguered country; and must build a strong relationship with Russia so that the authoritarian practices of the past that led to such disastrous results can be transformed to a more open, hopeful society, whose future will be of unlimited potential.

The occasion of the Chernobyl's 20th anniversary offers a unique opportunity to step back in time and reflect on fragility of human life as we interact with powers of nature and technology. Let us be thoughtful and mindful of the lessons of Chernobyl in our everyday actions.

CHILDREN OF CHORNOBYL RELIEF FUND

The Children of Chernobyl Relief and Development Fund wishes to add its support to House Resolution No. 703: "Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supporting continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant".

For the past sixteen years our organization has been working to address the human legacy of the world's worst environmental accident. Relying almost exclusively on private contributions, CCRDF has delivered over \$53 million dollars worth of medical supplies, state-of-the-art technology and physician training programs to help save the lives of children stricken with thyroid cancer, leukemia, birth defects, and early childhood diseases.

The children who are undergoing treatment in our 20 partner hospitals offer painful but eloquent testimony to the critical need for continuing medical aid to the Chernobyl survivors. It is now well established that the nuclear disaster caused an epidemic in thyroid cancer beginning in the 1990s. Children and adults who were exposed to radioactive iodine were stricken at a rate of 80 times higher than normal. Over 9,000 additional children in Ukraine have been diagnosed with precancerous conditions. But thyroid cancer is just one of many health problems confronting the Chernobyl communities. Fully one-third of all children in some provinces suffer from endocrine disorders or tumors that require medical or surgical intervention. Children who live in contaminated territories suffer from immune deficiencies and depleted levels of killer-T cells at a much higher rate than children from relatively clean zones.

Recent studies by Ukrainian and Israeli scientists have shown that the children born to Chernobyl nuclear cleanup workers—the so-called “liquidators” have a seven-fold increase in chromosome damage as compared to their siblings born prior to the Chernobyl accident. There is growing evidence that birth defects have doubled in the wake of Chernobyl, and the rate of some birth defects, such as spina bifida and cataracts are even higher. The Ukrainian-American Association for the Prevention of Birth Defects under the direction of an eminent geneticist from Alabama—Dr. Włodzimierz Wiertelicki has been tracking birth defects among a very large population of newborns in the provinces of Rivne and Volyn in northwestern Ukraine. They have found an epidemic of spina bifida, and a wide range of other deformities that are ordinarily extremely rare. Although USAID has discontinued funding for Dr. Wiertelicki's research centers, we believe that his program has proven its value. The next stage could be even more important as Dr. Wiertelicki's team is developing programs to reduce the incidence of birth defects through prenatal programs and the introduction of folic acid into local foodstuffs.

The United States could play a vital role in creating a nationwide birth defects registry in Ukraine and Belarus. Our government could also help to save the lives of thousands of youngsters who are born each year with congenital heart defects by providing training and technology to diagnose these life-threatening conditions at birth or in early childhood.

We have seen how even modest investments can have a dramatic impact on infant survival and cancer remission rates at several of our partner hospitals. In Kharkiv Children's Hospital No. 16, for instance, the recovery and remission rates for childhood leukemia have improved from a dismal 5 per cent in 1991 (a virtual death sentence) to 75 per cent in 2004 thanks to the installation of modern equipment such as a blood cell separator and a full protocol of chemotherapeutic agents. We have created model neonatal intensive care units in Poltava and Lviv and Dnipropetrovsk, where infant mortality has dropped by as much as 45 to 80 per cent, even as the hospitals began to take on a larger volume of infants with more difficult pathologies. By raising the standard of care, we have also stimulated citizen initiatives, private philanthropy and indigenous government programs that were virtually unheard of during the Soviet era.

Thanks to the generous support of the Ukrainian-American community, and thanks to corporate donors such as John Deere, Monsanto, Philip Morris and UMC, we have been able to bring doctors the tools and training they needed to achieve quantum leaps in the kind of care they can provide their patients.

Unfortunately, Chernobyl's legacy is likely to endure long after this 20th Anniversary. We have to remember that the 20-year latency period for many forms of cancer is just beginning to toll, and already, Chernobyl liquidators are dying of oncological illnesses at a rate almost triple the rate of working age males in Ukraine. Of the 34,000 liquidators who have died in Ukraine to date, 25% died of various forms of cancer as compared to a rate of 9% for most Ukrainians. Our colleagues at the National Institute of Pediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynecology in Kyiv have found evidence of cesium-137 and strontium-90 in placentas and breastmilk, showing that newborn infants are being directly exposed to highly dangerous radioactive materials at their most vulnerable stage. We need to remember that the half-life for these elements is 30 years, so they will be with us for many years to come.

In the coming years, the United States Government should make significant efforts to strengthen Ukraine's medical infrastructure, and to invest in better maternal and children's health. We must also provide funding for independent research studies that will look at a wide range of other health problems such as the accumulation of radionuclides in the gastro-intestinal tract of youngsters who live in areas contaminated with radioactive materials.

For our part, we will do everything in our power to reduce the impact of Chernobyl by giving Ukrainian children a fighting chance to overcome even the most daunting illnesses. We thank you for your consideration.

ALEXANDER B. KUZMA

Executive Director

CHERNOBYL CHILDREN'S PROJECT

INTERNATIONAL,

New York, NY.

Chernobyl Children's Project International supports House Resolution No. 703: “Recognizing the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and supporting continued efforts to control radiation and mitigate the adverse health consequences related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.”

Chernobyl Children's Project International has worked with health care institutions and communities in Belarus for fifteen years. A partnership between Ireland and the United States, we have delivered over \$70 million in humanitarian and medical aid. Working with citizens of Belarus, we provide a children's cardiac surgery program, community care programs for disabled children, nursing and therapeutic programs and training, foster homes and hospice services.

In Belarus, 1.8 million people continue to live in radiation-contaminated zones—over 420,000 of them children. Our work keeps us in close contact with scientists, researchers, NGOs and physicians in Belarus who have first hand knowledge of the social, economic, and health needs of the communities they serve. They observe and have documented increases in cancer, birth defects, and cardiac and immune disorders since the Chernobyl disaster. Data from experts and health professionals in the affected regions is often overlooked by their counterparts in the West. The Belarusian Academy of Sciences reports that among children, morbidity, sicknesses have increased by almost one-third, new cancers by 1.5 times, and blood diseases by 1.5 times. Sixty to 70 percent of Belarusians who live in contaminated zones who have been checked at the Belarusian Institute of Radiation Medicine have critical levels of radiation in their bodies.

Although the link between the Chernobyl disaster and thyroid cancer has by now been firmly established, it is important to note that it took years for this epidemic to emerge. Screening and early intervention

programs have thus been able to minimize but not erase the human toll of thyroid cancer. The first warnings were sounded by the medical and NGO communities in Belarus and Ukraine well before the link between the disease and the disaster were widely acknowledged, and in fact initial reports of increases were dismissed.

The latency period for the emergence of many cancers is 20+ years, and today respected researchers and clinicians are voicing concern over the emergence of birth defects, non thyroid cancers and blood and immune disorders.

The Chernobyl Forum report made an important contribution to the understanding of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster by highlighting the complex interplay of factors that impact the quality of life in Chernobyl affected regions, and by encouraging the international community to focus on projects that address poverty, lack of economic opportunity, inadequate health care, and environmental degradation. While we support this holistic approach, it is far too soon to say that we know all there is to know about the long term health effects of Chernobyl. We strongly submit that the U.S. Government and the international community must acknowledge the need for further research and to continue to examine the health effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

KATHY RYAN,

Executive Director/USA.

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 703, but I feel compelled to qualify my support to ensure the people of Ukraine continue to receive support in the wake of this tragedy.

To understand the gravity of the worst nuclear accident in history, let's review what happened on April 26th, 1986. While testing the reactor, a series of mishaps led to a large chemical explosion that resulted in the 1,000-ton cover blowing off the top of the reactor.

Ultimately, fifty tons of uranium fuel from the reactor core vaporized immediately, and were blasted high into the atmosphere; a further 70 tons of uranium and 900 tons of highly radioactive graphite were dispersed into the area around the reactor, starting more than 30 fires; the 800 tons of graphite that remained in the reactor core caught fire at once, creating a radiological inferno that would burn for 10 days, sending a continuous plume of lethal radionuclides roiling into the sky.

The Soviet government would wait nearly three full days before acknowledging that an accident had taken place, and did so only after the drifting plume set off radiation alarms in a nuclear plant in Sweden. Nine million people were exposed to radiation in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

The contaminants, which included plutonium isotopes with a half-life of 24,360 years, eventually traveled around the globe, depositing radioactive material as far away as the lakes of Japan and the hill farms of north Wales. The long-lived radioactivity released was more than 200 times that of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The economic consequences of the accident remain a massive burden on the countries most affected; Belarus and Ukraine continue to spend around 6% of their Gross National Product on trying to deal with the consequences of the accident.

I have concerns with the following clause in H. Res. 703 because it sanctions an attempt to downplay the health effects on millions of innocent people.

"Whereas the findings of the Chernobyl Forum, issued in September 2005, significantly added to the understanding of the health consequences and economic impact caused by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster;"

The Chernobyl Forum study understates the health consequences of Chernobyl. The authors excluded more than 30,000 anticipated cancer deaths from the collective doses in all other countries in the Northern Hemisphere. Over 6,000 thyroid cancer cases have been diagnosed so far in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, and more are anticipated. Recent scientific studies are revealing an increased incidence of solid cancers, including breast cancer, as well as cardiovascular and ophthalmic effects. These effects have long latency periods of more than 20 years.

In the Rivne region of Ukraine, 310 miles west of Chernobyl, doctors say they are coming across an unusual rate of cancers and mutations. There is a 30 percent incidence rate amongst people in the highly radiated areas that have physical disorders, including heart and blood diseases, cancers and respiratory diseases. Nearly one in three of all the newborn babies have deformities.

It took some 600,000 workers for recovery and clean-up operations, all of them exposed to high levels of radiation. Studies show that almost 35,000 people who took part in the cleanup of Chernobyl have died in the years since the catastrophe. The rate of death from cancer was nearly three times as high as in the rest of the population.

The conflicting scientific studies suggest much more research needs to be done. But it is essential that we do not minimize the effects of this disaster without cause.

I am concerned that any effort to downplay the effects of this disaster may jeopardize the U.S. financial commitment to Ukraine and the innocent victims. I cannot support anything that might permit the U.S. to abandon the Belarus, Russia and Ukraine victims of Chernobyl.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGETT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 703.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT AND CONTINUED POLICE REFORM IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 744) expressing support for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace

in Northern Ireland and support for continued police reform in Northern Ireland as a critical element in the peace process.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 744

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, in Belfast, was endorsed in a referendum by the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;

Whereas the parties to the Good Friday Agreement made a clear commitment to "partnership, equality, and mutual respect" as the basis for moving forward in pursuit of lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

Whereas the parties to the Good Friday Agreement also affirmed their "total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means" in pursuit of lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

Whereas inclusive power-sharing based on these defining qualities is essential to the viability and advancement of the democratic process in Northern Ireland;

Whereas paramilitary activity by both traditions in a democratic society undermines the trust and confidence that are essential in a political system based on inclusive power-sharing in Northern Ireland;

Whereas on September 26, 2005, the International Independent Commission on Decommissioning (IIICD) confirmed the Irish Republican Army had destroyed its full arsenal of weapons;

Whereas the Good Friday Agreement called for police reform and establishment of a "new beginning" in policing in Northern Ireland with an effective, accountable, and fair police service capable of attracting support from the entire community, maintaining law and order, and adhering to the principle of the protection of human rights;

Whereas the new Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has made great strides in becoming an integrated, professional, and impartial police force under civilian control and responsive to all community concerns, and has worked to protect both communities from violence;

Whereas significant further work in police reform, and in fostering community acceptance of the PSNI, must still be accomplished;

Whereas the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland continue to strongly support the Good Friday Agreement as the way forward in the peace process and have committed themselves to its implementation; and

Whereas the Government of the United States continues to strongly support the peace process in Northern Ireland: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives—

(A) reiterates its support for the Good Friday Agreement, signed on April 10, 1998, in Belfast, as the blueprint for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland;

(B) commends the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Tony Blair and the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern for their leadership and persistence in seeking a peaceful resolution in Northern Ireland;

(C) commends the Sinn Féin leadership in successfully urging the Irish Republican Army to end its armed struggle and verifiably put its weapons beyond use;

(D) commends Sir Hugh S. Orde, Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), for his leadership and for working to protect both communities;

(E) commends the PSNI for the institution of the Historical Enquiries Team, which will provide a thorough and independent examination of unresolved deaths that occurred in

connection with the Troubles from 1968 to 1989;

(F) commends Nuala O'Loan and the Police Ombudsman's Office for the work they have done in promoting human rights in law enforcement and in fostering community confidence in the PSNI; and

(G) commends the work of the Northern Irish Policing Board and its District Partnerships for promoting genuine community policing in Northern Ireland; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) all groups and organizations should end their involvement in paramilitary activity;

(B) all political parties in Northern Ireland should—

(i) agree to share power with all parties according to the democratic mandate of the Good Friday Agreement; and

(ii) commit to work in good faith with all the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement, which established the Northern Ireland Assembly and an inclusive Executive, the North-South Ministerial Council, and the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference, for the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland;

(C) since policing reform is a significant part of winning public confidence and acceptance in the new form of government in Northern Ireland, all political parties should cooperate fully with the PSNI in preventing and investigating crimes; and

(D) the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Ireland should work to achieve full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including devolution of policing and justice, the normalization of the security presence, and of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland reforms, including long-term senior-level exchanges between the Garda Síochána, the police service of the Republic of Ireland, and the PSNI.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LEACH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Iowa.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Iowa?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEACH. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 744, a resolution introduced by International Relations Committee Chairman HENRY HYDE. H. Res. 744 expresses support by the House for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 as the blueprint for lasting peace in Northern Ireland. In addition, it supports continued police reform in Northern Ireland, which is a critical element in the implementation of the Good Friday Accords.

At this time, I would like to commend Chairman HENRY HYDE, as well as Representatives ELTON GALLEGLY and CHRIS SMITH as well as our distinguished ranking members TOM LANTOS and JOE CROWLEY for their work on